

Submitter: Dana Estensen
On Behalf Of: Oppose HB 4002
Committee: Joint Committee On Farm Worker Overtime
Measure: HB4002

We are wine grape farmers in Marion and Yamhill Counties and are very concerned about the impact that HB 4002A, the ag overtime proposal, would have on farms, ranches and their employees. It is apparent that HB 4002A will cost workers their jobs, will reduce worker income, and will result in the closure of family farms and ranches in Oregon.

We already do everything we can to compensate employees fairly and provide a safe, healthy work environment. Our employees are treated with dignity and respect. Unfortunately, as farmers, we are price takers. This means that the sale price of our crops doesn't increase when labor and other costs increase. Where will this estimated 10% - 15% increase to our current labor costs come from? Tax credits are not a workable or durable solution. Any added costs will have to be absorbed by the farms and ranches.

Oregon's specialty crops are labor intensive and have peak seasonal needs. Our peak times in the vineyards are January through mid-October and hand labor tasks include pruning, shoot positioning/wire moving, shoot/cluster thinning and harvest. We are as mechanized as we can be but still need the hand labor done in a timely manner in order for our leafers, hedgers, sprayers, harvesters and other equipment to work efficiently and effectively.

We are currently working around 50 hours per week and that will ramp up to 55 - 60 hours a week. We need to find a practical, lasting solution by fine-tuning the structure of the overtime proposal to account for the seasonal and year-round needs of the agriculture industry. The solution needs to include a threshold significantly above 40 hours/week and a seasonal peak time exemption. A compromise needs to be reached that allows local farms and ranches to remain viable while protecting employees' jobs and paychecks.

Farmers have been clear about the consequences of this policy, but we are also worried that farm employees will see their hours capped or reduced resulting in lower paychecks or jobs lost if overtime pay is required after 40-hours. Ag workers in other state are already experiencing this issue.

As a farmer who is concerned for Oregon's farm and ranches as well as their employees, I urge you to oppose an overtime mandate at 40-hours in HB 4002A. We would rather take our chances making our case to BOLI than deal with the immediate

consequences of the passage of HB 4002A. Please help us save agricultural jobs and family farmers and ranchers - VOTE NO ON HB 4002A!